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Donovan Optimistic On Release of Captives

MIAMI, Fla., Jan. 26 (AP)—Donovan returned tonight from a Havana conference with Fidel Castro and expressed optimism for release of Americans imprisoned in Cuba.

Donovan said also he was negotiating with the Cuban Prime Minister for the release of Cubans held as political prisoners.

He refused to speculate on when the Americans—about 25 of them—would be released. He said he was "very optimistic" for their early release.

Mr. Donovan engineered the liberation last month of 1,113 captives from the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion in exchange for \$53 million in food and medicine badly needed in Cuba.

The negotiator had one further note of cheer for relatives of the American prisoners:

"I have assurances that living conditions of the American prisoners are being very materially improved."

He said he still is negotiating as counsel for the Cuban Families Committee. He said, however, that he is keeping the State Department fully informed on his efforts.

Published estimates of Cubans jailed as political offenders have ranged from 5,000 to 80,000. The negotiator would go into no detail about negotiations for their release.

Mr. Donovan said he talked about three hours with Castro and lunched with the Cuban Prime Minister at "lavishly furnished house" in Havana's Miramar section.